

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

**DeSmet School District  
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2005-2006**

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**Dates of On Site Visit:** January 11, 2006

**Date of Report:** January 30, 2006

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This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by Special Education Programs. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

<b>Promising Practice</b>	The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.
<b>Meets Requirements</b>	The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.
<b>Needs Improvement</b>	The district/agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left unaddressed may result in non-compliance.
<b>Out of Compliance</b>	The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.
<b>Not applicable</b>	In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

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<b>Principle 1 – General Supervision</b>
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General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

**Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- B – District/Agency Instructional Staff Information
- C – Suspension and Expulsion Information
- D – Statewide Assessment Information
- E – Enrollment Information
- F – Placement Alternatives
- G – Disabling Conditions

- H – Exiting Information
- Parent Survey, referrals, publications of child find Notices
- Comprehensive plan
- Yearly child find results

### **Promising practice**

The steering committee concluded that DeSmet K-12 staff participated in a Data Retreat which was conducted in the summer of 2003. The Data Retreat involved hands-on analysis of four lenses of data: student data, professional practices, programs and structures, and parent and community involvement. Working collaboratively and reflectively, the DeSmet staff examined test data and classroom grades which enabled them to paint a picture of student achievement. They also correlated student achievement with school programs. Considerable time was devoted to analyzing the data and determining areas of strength and weakness.

As strengths and weakness in academic achievement were discovered, staff began to explore professional development that had been provided to teachers in the district; as well as examine professional practices. Once the data had been gathered, staff discussed and recorded observations made concerning the data they had compiled, and formulated hypotheses concerning student achievement in the DeSmet district. Goals were then articulated for the district and strategies were implemented to help achieve the goals.

During the summer of 2004 the district began mapping curriculum. All teachers began the process of mapping their individual content areas. K-12 math staff mapped all of their classes and the result was a K-12 vertical alignment of the district's math curriculum. Math teachers also participated in the year long process of up-dating and refining the math maps during the current school year. The same process was used for language arts in the summer of 2005.

Teachers meet as often as needed to discuss problems of concern for students. The district has Teacher Assistance Teams (TAT) in place. They conduct brainstorming sessions to help benefit students. 20 out of 22 district staff surveyed indicated the school has sufficient pre-referral interventions and support services available to maintain at risk students in the general education program. A pre-referral form is filled out which gives modifications and ideas for the classroom teacher. Teachers document modifications tried to help students succeed in the regular classroom.

### **Needs improvement**

The steering committee concluded that paraprofessionals need to be evaluated annually.

## **Validation Results**

### **Promising practice**

TAT implemented in the district in the spring of 2005 was validated as an area of promising practice. The district process is implemented in six levels, beginning with a teacher documenting background information on the student referred to referring the student for evaluation.

The monitoring team could not validate the data retreat as an area of promising practice.

### **Needs improvement**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as needing improvement as identified by the steering committee.

## **Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education**

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- State Tables C,E,F,K, L, M, N
- Age at referral
- Number of students screened
- Personnel development education
- Preschool age
- School age
- Personnel training
- Budget information
- Comprehensive plan
- Surveys

#### **Meets requirements**

The steering committee concluded the school district provides FAPE for children birth through 21 as determined by their IEP. The district follows state and federal regulations to ensure FAPE for all students.

### **Validation Results**

#### **Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements under free appropriate public education (FAPE) as concluded by the steering committee.

## **Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation**

A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- State tables G,H,I,J
- Teacher file reviews
- Surveys
- Comprehensive plan

- Parent and teacher report forms
- Initial referral

### **Meets requirements**

The steering committee concluded the written notice and consent for evaluation documents contain all the required content. Functional evaluation data in all areas of suspected disability and evaluation reports are available for all students. Students are evaluated in all areas of suspected disability.

Transition evaluations are conducted prior to students turning age 16 years old. A multidisciplinary team written report (MDT) report is available for all with students with learning disabilities.

Parents indicated that test results are explained so they understand. Copies of the evaluation reports are sent to parents with the prior notice for the IEP meeting or given to them at the IEP meeting. Reevaluations are conducted every 3 years to determine continued eligibility and develop the students program.

### **Needs improvement**

The steering committee concluded all tests listed on the prior notice/consent need to be consistently administered.

## **Validation Results**

### **Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements under appropriate evaluation as concluded by the steering committee.

### **Out of compliance**

#### **ARSD 24:05:30:04 Prior notice and parent consent**

Informed parental consent must be obtained before conducting a first-time evaluation, reevaluation, and before initial placement of a child in a program providing special education or special education and related services. Parental consent is not required before:

- (1) Reviewing existing data as part of an evaluation or reevaluation; or
- (2) Administering a test or other evaluation that is administered to all children unless, before administration of that test or evaluation, consent is required of parents of all children.

#### **ARSD 24:05:25:04 Evaluation procedures**

School districts shall ensure, at a minimum, that evaluation procedures include the following:

- (7) The child is assessed in all areas related to the suspected disability, including, as applicable, health, vision, hearing, social and emotional status, general intelligence, academic performance, communicative status, and motor abilities;

Through interview and a review of student records, assessments were administered for three of four high school students that were not included on the prior notice/consent signed by the parents. The prior notice/consent did not consistently represent the evaluation information needed to support the students identified disability. For example:

1) The prior notice/consent for a student identified on child count as emotionally disturbed stated ability, achievement and developmental assessments would be administered to determine continued eligibility.

Developmental testing was not appropriate for a student of this age and was not administered. Behavior and social evaluations were administered without prior notice/consent from the parents.

2) The prior notice/consent for a student identified on child count as a student with autism stated ability, achievement, speech, transition and functional assessments would be administered. Adaptive behavior, social and autism evaluations were administered without parental prior notice/consent. Behavior evaluations were not administered to support the autism diagnosis.

3) The prior notice/consent for a student identified as having a specific learning disability indicated academic and functional evaluations would be administered to determine continued eligibility. Ability, language and transition evaluations were administered without parental prior notice/consent.

**ARSD 24:05:25:06. Reevaluations.** Reevaluations shall be conducted at least every three years or if conditions warrant or if the child's parent or teacher requests an evaluation. Reevaluations must be completed within 25 school days after receipt by the district of signed consent to reevaluate unless other time limits are agreed to by the school administration and the parents. Each school district shall follow the procedures under § 24:05:25:04.02 when reevaluating a student for the additional purposes of:

- (1) Determining whether the child continues to have a disability;
- (2) Determining whether the child continues to need special education and related services; and
- (3) Determining whether any additions or modifications to the special education and related services are needed to enable the child to meet the measurable annual goals set out in the IEP and to participate, as appropriate, in the general curriculum.

If no additional data is needed to determine continuing eligibility, the district shall notify the parents of that determination and reasons for it and of the right of the parent to request an assessment, for purposes of services under this article, to determine continuing eligibility. The school district is not required to conduct an assessment unless requested to do so by the child's parents. However, a school district shall follow the procedures in this chapter before determining that the child is no longer a child with a disability. The evaluation procedures described in this chapter are not required before the termination of a child's eligibility under this article due to graduation with a regular high school diploma, or exceeding the age eligibility for FAPE.

Through interview and a review of three student records, evaluation procedures were not conducted to determine continued eligibility for the students. Two students were dismissed from physical therapy services and one student was dismissed from special education.

## **Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards**

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- State table L and M
- Teacher file reviews
- Surveys
- Comprehensive plan
- Parental right document
- Consent and prior notice forms
- Public awareness information
- FERPA disclosure

**Meets requirements**

The steering committee concluded district policy/regulation, parent surveys and file reviews indicate the district ensures parents are notified of their rights. The district obtains parental consent for placement into special education. District policies address complaint procedures and the comprehensive plan addresses the requirements for disclosure of student information.

## **Validation Results**

### **Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements under procedural safeguards as concluded by the steering committee.

## **Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program**

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

## **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Parent surveys
- Student surveys
- Comprehensive plan
- Teacher file reviews
- Personnel training
- Budget information

### **Meets requirements**

The steering committee concluded an interpreter is provided at IEP meetings when needed. The required members are present at IEP team meetings. Classroom teachers receive copies of goals and objectives for each of their students. IEP meetings are held annually for all students, and meet the required timelines. IEPs document how and when progress will be reported to parents. Parents surveyed stated they receive a copy of the IEP and reports about their child's progress on a regular basis.

Related service, modifications and extended school year needs are documented in student IEPs. Present levels of performance consistently link to annual goals. Annual goals are skill based and measurable/observable. Transition services are provided to all students 16 and older and younger if there is a need.

### **Out of compliance**

The steering committee concluded representatives from other agencies need to be invited to participate in IEP meetings for students of transition age.

## **Validation Results**

### **Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements under appropriate individual education program as concluded by the steering committee.

Through a review of four high school student records, representatives from other agencies were invited to participate in the IEP meeting for students of transition age.

#### **Out of compliance**

#### **ARSD 24:05:27:01.03. Content of individualized education program**

Each student's individualized education program shall include:

- (1) A statement of the student's present levels of educational performance, including:
  - (a) How the student's disability affects the student's involvement and progress in the general curriculum.
- (2) A statement of measurable annual goals, including benchmarks or short-term objectives, related to:
  - (a) Meeting the student's needs that result from the student's disability to enable the student to be involved in and progress in the general curriculum.

Through a review of nine student records, present levels of performance did not consistently contain specific skills linking to functional evaluation or state the student's involvement/progress in the general curriculum.

### **Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment**

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

#### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- State tables E,G,I,J,F and N
- File reviews
- Surveys

#### **Meets requirements**

LRE considerations are applied to preschool children with disabilities. Preschool services are provided by the Northeast Educational Services Cooperative for students with disabilities.

The district has policies and procedures in place for addressing the LRE of students.

#### **Needs improvement**

Students qualifying for services at the elementary level are pulled out of classes and taught a curriculum in the resource room most of the time. The percent of students seen in the resource room is two times the state average.

#### **Validation Results**

##### **Meets requirement**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements under least restrictive environment as concluded by the steering committee.

##### **Needs improvement**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as needing improvement under least restrictive environment as concluded by the steering committee.